

PURSUANT TO RULE 27(f) OF THE MISSISSIPPI RULES OF APPELLATE PROCEDURE, THE RULES COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE SEEKS COMMENTS FROM THE BENCH, THE BAR AND THE PUBLIC ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MISSISSIPPI RULES OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE.

Comments should be filed with the Clerk of the Supreme Court, Gartin Justice Building, P.O. Box 249, Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0249.
Deadline: **Wednesday, March 15, 2023.**

Provided below are the proposed amendments to selected rules, with highlights and strikeouts denoting changes from the current rules.

RULE 7 COUNSEL

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Rule 7.2 Procedure for Appointment of Counsel for Indigent Defendants; Appearance; Withdrawal

(a) Procedure for Appointment of Counsel for Indigent Defendants.

(1) Generally. A procedure shall be established in each circuit, county, municipal, and justice court for the appointment of counsel for each indigent defendant entitled thereto.

(2) Appointment of Multiple Attorneys. In all death penalty trial proceedings, the court shall appoint two (2) attorneys pursuant to the standards in Rule 7.4. At the time of the appointment, and subject to court approval, the appointed attorney may recommend co-counsel so long as co-counsel is willing to accept the appointment and meets all of the requirements of Rule 7.4. If the appointed attorney does not recommend co-counsel upon accepting an appointment, the court shall select co-counsel. In non-death penalty cases, the appointment of multiple attorneys is within the discretion of the court.

(b) Entry of Appearance. At or before a first appearance in any court on behalf of a defendant, an attorney, whether privately retained or court-appointed, shall file an entry of appearance or, in lieu thereof, the court shall note the attorney's appearance on the record.

(c) Duty of Continuing Representation. Counsel representing a defendant at any stage following indictment shall continue to represent that defendant in all further proceedings in the trial court case, including filing a notice of appeal, unless counsel is allowed to withdraw

for good cause as approved by the court and new counsel is retained or appointed (unless the right to counsel has been properly waived pursuant to Rule 7.1(c)).

(d) Withdrawal. When an attorney makes an appearance for any party in a case, that attorney will not be allowed to withdraw as attorney for the party without the permission of the court. The attorney making the request shall give notice to his/her client and to all attorneys in the cause and certify the same to the court in writing. The court shall not permit withdrawal without prior notice to his/her client and all attorneys of record.

Comment

Rule 7.2(a) requires that each circuit shall establish governing local procedures for the appointment of counsel for indigent defendants. Local court rules are promulgated pursuant to Rule 1.9.

Rule 7.2(c) effectuates a defendant's right to be represented by counsel in any criminal proceeding and through all stages of the criminal process. See MRCrP 7.1(a) & cmt. contemplates that the usual procedure will be that, following indictment, Apart from court-approved withdrawal, counsel will continue to represent the defendant through all stages of the trial proceedings case, including filing a notice of appeal. See M.R.A.P. 6(b). In addition to being familiar with the case, continued representation guarantees that a defendant's right of appeal is not lost in the period between termination of trial counsel's responsibilities and retention or appointment of appellate counsel.

Nothing in Rule 7.2 limits the ability of a court to establish a procedure pursuant to Rule 7.2(a)(1) for appointing an attorney to represent a defendant for a limited purpose or time, after which another attorney is appointed or retained to represent the defendant for subsequent proceedings. In that event, trial counsel should be substituted as soon as practicable.

Rule 7.2(d) is consistent with former Rule 1.13 of the Uniform Rules of Circuit and County Court Practice. Normally, appointed counsel will not be permitted to withdraw prior to filing a notice of appeal. If the court allows counsel to withdraw, the court shall see that new counsel is retained or appointed before granting permission to withdraw, unless the right to counsel has been properly waived pursuant to Rule 7.1(c). In this way, subsection (d) maintains the integrity of the trial date, while also protecting the interests of the defendant and aiding the trial court in providing continuity in legal representation.

Nothing in Rules 7.2(c) or (d) limits the ability of a court to appoint an attorney to represent a defendant for a limited purpose or time, after which another attorney is appointed or retained to represent the defendant for subsequent proceedings.